

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

You couldn't escape *Survivor*, the "reality" TV show on CBS, last summer. The drama was the subject of conversation around dinner tables across America for weeks.

But superintendents understand that you don't have to go to the South China Sea and compete with 15 strangers if you want to see such drama personally. Superintendents just go to work every day on their own little islands of turf and see if they can outwit, outlast and outplay everyone who wants to make their lives unbearable.

Unfortunately, most superintendents aren't competing for a \$1 million prize. Instead, they're just trying to keep enough people happy to draw paychecks and win the chance to come back and do their jobs again.

The rules to surviving in the golf maintenance world aren't that much different than they were for the cast of the show. Instead of rat, you will have to learn to eat crow. There will be many sleepless nights. And the only immunity you can win is by having the course in perfect shape for the Member/Guest Tournament. Besides, immunity in this game means little. It allows you to keep your job for one more week before your golfers start asking the eternal question, "What have you done for me lately?"

If you play the game with a blue-sky attitude, you will soon be voted off the island, so you'd better make some alliances fast if you want to survive. Trust me, alliances are definitely the best chance for survival.

It takes a clever superintendent to keep everyone happy and on your side. You have to promise the world to your superiors and your subordinates. At the same time, you have to maintain civil relations to your fellow managers who head up other departments on your little island of bliss.

Figure out which person with whom you want to go down to the final vote. Is it the owner, the general manager, the green chairman or club president? Or maybe you work for a management company and your best alliance is with the regional manager or vice president. Whoever it is, you have to keep him or her satisfied and in your corner.

Golf Business Mirrors Reality TV

BY JOEL JACKSON



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But beware: Trying to build alliances with this many people is a challenge, and playing the committee chairman and department heads against each other is risky. Remember, they're trying to survive, too.

As you know if you followed the TV show, it isn't always the tribal member with the sunny disposition and focus on teamwork that survives until the bitter end. More often, survival goes to the cunning and the outspoken — those who show leadership and strength, not courtesy and obedience. Making tough choices takes planning and understanding of the consequences. But when it comes down to the wire, who are you trying to save? It had better be you because no one else will be covering your back.

The people who work for you must also be your allies. While you might not have the authority to give them extra portions of rice at meal time as the members of the TV show did, you have to make them think you are always trying to find more for them to eat. Maybe you can scare up some health and retirement benefits. Keep in mind that if the crew doesn't work together, the tribal council will be putting your name on the banishment ballot — not theirs.

If all of this sounds too conniving and manipulative, then maybe you shouldn't be on the island in the first place. Maybe you'll be content to last for a little while and move from island to island instead. If so, you'd better enjoy your 15 minutes of fame before the tribe banishes you for some real or perceived shortcoming.

But if you want to stay in for the long haul, you had better learn to play the game.

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